

Dear Village Committee and Commission Members:

Thank you for your service and commitment to our community. The Village Board works through an annual prioritization process to identify the areas of focus for our community. The prioritization list serves as a tool when developing budgets, allocating staff time, and guiding decisions for the community. We are looking to our committees to partner with the Board on advancing these priorities. As such, it is important for the committees to understand the priorities and planned work ahead. This year, a number of new initiatives have made the top of the prioritization list in addition to priorities that have been on the list for many years. Please see the attached documents detailing the prioritization process, trustee comments, and vote distribution for further context.

The top 6 priorities for the current Board are as follows:

1. Village Economy/Economic Development
2. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)
3. Sustainability and Climate Change
4. Village Library Consideration
5. Fiscal Responsibility
6. Housing

Economic Development:

Economic development within the village is first on the priority list and has been on the priority list for many years. Inherently, the priorities that follow are critical domains needed to support a vibrant local economy. We want to bring businesses to the community. In order to attract businesses, the community needs to be a desirable place to live, work, and play.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:

The Village Board has taken a number of actions in the last few months in regards to this new priority. One of the immediate actions of the Board was to pass Resolution 2020-07. This is a joint resolution of Cottage Grove Village Board and Cottage Grove Police Department to condemn and confront racism. This resolution includes a commitment to “opening a dialogue that acknowledges, confronts, and addresses intentional racism, systemic racism, racial biases and implicit biases within our community.” A copy of this Resolution is attached.

Additionally, the Board will be forming an Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. This committee will assist the Board in reviewing Village practices, policies, procedures, objectives and goals as related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Another component of this initiative is to encourage all elected officials, citizen appointees, staff, and community members to learn about diversity, equity and inclusion and how we can work towards demonstrating and reflecting these values within our community.

Sustainability and Climate Change

The Village Board has also taken immediate action on this new priority. The Board has formed an Ad Hoc Sustainability Committee to review the village’s practices and procedures and see if

there are ways the village could improve on our environmental footprint. This committee will also work with the Board to encourage and educate our community around sustainable practices.

Village Library:

The Library Planning Committee was formed in November, 2019, to determine if there is support in our community to build a library. The Committee has learned that while a library may not be the top reason to move to a community, it is clearly noted as missing. For many, a library is an important part of a community. Libraries provide a public space that provides a resource for a community and citizens. The committee will bring forward a recommendation for next steps regarding the potential of a community library to the Village Board in the coming months.

Fiscal responsibility:

The Village Board has a 5-year fiscal plan, which we follow and monitor closely. Economic development helps to maintain or lower taxes for citizens. Slow growth in a community, both in business and residential development, coupled with the cost of living increases that occur every year will cause taxes to increase. Without development, the Village will either have to cut services or raise taxes to continue to provide the same level of service residents have come to expect.

Housing:

Over the past two years, multiple experts have presented to the Board, Plan Commission and CDA (Community Development Authority) regarding the importance of having housing that is affordable – meaning 1/3 of a family's income goes toward rent or mortgage.

Housing availability and affordability is an issue for both renters and homeowners in Dane County. The Dane County Housing Needs Assessment for 2019 highlighted the combination of a county-wide shortage of new housing, increased constructions costs, and strong demand which has only worsened housing affordability in our area. Cottage Grove does not currently have housing to support families with work in a variety of occupations with respectable earnings. This shortage of affordable housing (aka workforce housing) impacts our ability to support current businesses and be competitive for potential commercial growth because we can't provide a local labor pool.

The village is forming a Housing Task Force to work with experts to analyze our current housing stock and determine what types of housing our community is lacking. The Task Force will produce recommendations specific to Cottage Grove's housing needs while considering a wide range of populations including young people starting their careers, people at different income levels, empty nesters and those on a fixed income. The task force will also ensure that the Village is adhering to Wisconsin State Statutes related to housing and local government.

The work of the committee you serve on is vital to the success of these priorities. We look forward to working with you to continue to make our Village a safe, friendly and attractive community for businesses, neighbors, and families to live, learn, work, play and enjoy the richness and opportunities of a growing Village.

Dated this 3rd day of August 2020.

Signed by the Village Board